

“A unique forum in Europe”

an interview with the new EUnited President, Jean-Marc Kohlgruber

What has EUnited achieved in the past 6 years since its inception?

The European Engineering Industries Association EUnited was created back in 2004 to give a voice to industrial engineering equipment suppliers who found they were not represented at a European level by any other European Association. One of the founding stones and key strengths of EUnited is that companies are directly represented at this level rather than by a national association. Our structure is very efficient. We are able to represent a wide range of equipment suppliers, but are also able to provide dedicated services and expertise for each of our sectors and their member companies. This means information and activities are properly directed and information can pass swiftly between parties and be acted upon quickly.

We started with 4 equipment sectors namely Cleaning, Municipal Equipment, Metallurgy and Robotics, but we're embarking on a new phase with the hopeful addition of another 2 sectors in the next 12 months. The membership base has continued to grow with EUnited now boasting over 90 members predominately SMEs, originating from all over Europe.

In terms of achievements EUnited continues to lobby hard on issues relevant to its members. Our Robotics sector manages the European technology platform for Robotics, Municipal Equipment is developing an EU wide harmonised system for testing equipment, while Cleaning is involved in technical legislation for energy using products Directives. Metallurgy is creating a valuable network with customer associations and initiating a common position of Energy Intensive Industries, as well as leading the way to have harmonised European safety standards for the metallurgical equipment industry.

I took over as President of EUnited in December 2009 from founding President Dieter Klingenberg. I'm very

keen to build on the solid foundations that he laid but naturally this is quite an act to follow, especially with the recent crisis. European excellence means we are very resilient in many areas of engineering equipment.

How have your member companies, who are predominately SMEs, fared during the economic crisis?

No question the economic crisis affected some of our members, some felt the impact earlier, in particular in the high-tech sectors such as Robotics, while others expect to be affected by postponed or cancelled investment in plant and equipment. However, many of our members have strong positions in markets outside Europe including South America, China and India and many have been sustained through successful business here. This is certainly true of my company CMI Industry, which is a member of EUnited Metallurgy.

More recent reports indicate that 2009 ended on a stronger note than anticipated. We don't know how 2010 will look – there will be a slowdown but it's difficult to generalise about the sectors and markets.

Looking forward, what are the key issues you need to address in the Equipment Suppliers industry sector?

The key issues can be broken down into 2 areas. The first is keeping a close eye on forthcoming EU Trade agreements, EU regulations and the drive for higher standards which extend from noise issues, environmental and pollution issues to health and safety.

The second is assisting our members to take advantage of innovation funding and research actions. The new EU Innovation Minister, Geoghegan-Quinn, under the Barroso leadership, sees innovation and R&D as the key drivers to building a strong European



Jean-Marc Kohlgruber— President CMI Industry, Belgium

defence against growing engineering skills and competition from India and in particular China. We must make sure that our equipment suppliers, with their well developed expertise, are able to make use of all resources available to stay ahead in this the global marketplace.

EUnited represents a number of quite different sectors – what are the binding factors of your Trade Association?

The binding factors lie in the simple fact that all of our members are equipment suppliers to the engineering sector. Although the sectors are different the experiences and many challenges are common between the sectors. In terms of EUnited, we operate through sector dedicated teams but we also cross-over when working as a unit which gives us increased presence and gravitas particularly in relation to Position Papers and presenting a united force at EU level.

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The new EU Commission is very keen to promote innovation. Are there some opportunities for your members?

There is financial assistance available, particularly for SMEs, for research projects. The EU is currently revising their procedures to make applying and project management as well as financial management more straight forward.

Was Brussels an obvious choice for your headquarters - what are the benefits?

We find it particularly beneficial to be based in Brussels where all new legislation and industrial policy is negotiated. Our Executive Director, Lionel Platteuw, keeps us informed regarding EU activities, conferences, trends, ensuring that we are ahead of the game on issues which may affect our members and he provides a recognisable face of EUnited at a European and International level.

How do you see the evolution of EUnited in terms of its membership, reach and influence on EU policy?

EUnited is embarking on a growth phase. We know we are well positioned as an association with direct membership. We're not complacent but we believe we are more effective than other forms of representation. We have a more "hands-on" service for members and this will be built on further in terms of member acquisition as well as new sector acquisition. In terms of influence EUnited has established itself with the support of other organisations such as VDMA, the German national association for equipment suppliers. We make it our business to interact with other organisations such as the newly formed EFFRA and we are increasingly recognized as professional European partner by the European Commission. That's where we need to be.

Concerning reach, we will also be promoting our Associate Member status (for Equipment suppliers who do not have a registered Head Office within the EU) where we feel there is good synergy with our existing membership. We feel this could add an interesting dynamic to our association.

What is your personal vision for EUnited now you are President?

My personal vision is to continue the good work taking place in all our member sectors and to support and guide them with their activities. If we can support companies in their evolution through technical expertise and if we can help develop the right regulatory environment, then we're contributing to their competitiveness in

Jean-Marc Kohlgruber is President of EUnited, Board member of EUnited Metallurgy, President of CMI Industry and Chairman of CMI FPE Ltd.



EUnited Board from the left, Lionel Platteuw, Executive Director, Markus Asch, Alfred Kärcher GmbH, EUnited President Jean-Marc Kohlgruber, CMI Industry, Thilo Brodtmann, VDMA Robotics (missing Manfred Gundel, Kuka Roboter GmbH)

the face of newly competitive and highly aggressive nations and such as China, India and South Korea. I also feel that competition has to be fair and I am keen to participate in the formulation of the International Trade Agreements being set in place.

I believe EUnited is a unique forum and very well suited to the challenges our industry is facing: there is a limit to what companies can individually achieve. We need co-ordinated solutions to energy, environmental and other challenges including research, trade, skills and employment. We're already demonstrating great results from acting collectively as an association.

I invite anyone interested to see for themselves and come to our annual Competitiveness Review in Brussels (every December), to meet our members and network.

For more information about EUnited or the forth-coming competitiveness review please contact Lionel Platteuw at lionel.platteuw@eu-nited.net website www.eu-nited.net

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